

CATFISH PROCESSING



ARKANSAS
AGRICULTURAL
STATISTICS
SERVICE

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Catfish Processing Down 7 Percent

Farm-raised catfish processed during March 2004 totaled 60.3 million pounds round weight, down 7 percent from March 2003. The average price paid to producers was 72.3 cents per pound for March 2004, up 2.0 cents from last month and 13.8 cents above a year ago.

Net pounds of processed fish sold during March 2004 totaled 28.8 million pounds, down 5 percent from the comparable month in 2003. Total end of the month inventory increased 2 percent from last month and was up 9 percent from a year ago. Sales of fresh fish, at 12.2 million pounds, were down 4 percent from March 2003 and represented 42 percent of total sales. Frozen fish sales, at 16.7 million pounds, were down 7 percent from a year ago and accounted for the remaining 58 percent of total fish sales. Sales of whole fish represented 18 percent of the total fish sold, fillets accounted for 60 percent, and the remaining 22 percent were mostly steaks, nuggets, and value added products.

The March 2004 average price received by processors for total fresh fish was \$2.22 per pound, an increase of 27 cents from last year. Prices for fresh whole fish were \$1.57 per pound, up 22 cents from last year. Prices for fresh fillets were up 27 cents at \$2.71 per pound. Total frozen fish averaged \$2.31 per pound, up 15 cents from March 2003. Prices for frozen whole fish were up 13 cents at \$1.97, while frozen fillets at \$2.67 per pound were up 24 cents from a year ago.

Freshwater imports of frozen, boneless, catfish fillets for February 2004 totaled 204 thousand pounds, 22 percent below a year ago. Fifty-six percent of the imports were from China, 21 percent from Cambodia, with the remainder coming from Guyana and Vietnam.

Exports of frozen, boneless catfish fillets reported for February 2004 totaled 127 thousand pounds, seventy-one percent of which went to Kuwait and the remainder to Germany and Turkey. Fresh fillet exports totaled 28.0 thousand pounds, with sixty-one percent going to Kuwait, and the balance going to Japan and the United Kingdom.

Import and export data are compiled by the U.S. Bureau of Census.

**Farm-Raised Catfish: Quantity Processed by Major Processors,
United States, 2003-2004**

Month	Round Weight Processed					Percent of Previous Year
	Monthly		Percent of Previous Year	Cumulative		
	2003	2004		2003	2004	
	<i>1,000 Pounds</i>	<i>1,000 Pounds</i>		<i>1,000 Pounds</i>	<i>1,000 Pounds</i>	
			<i>Percent</i>			<i>Percent</i>
Jan	55,523	53,849	97	55,523	53,849	97
Feb	55,461	54,173	98	110,984	108,022	97
Mar	65,007	60,272	93	175,991	168,294	96
Apr	57,105			233,096		
May	58,424			291,520		
Jun	52,441			343,961		
Jul	54,089			398,050		
Aug	54,153			452,203		
Sep	51,885			504,088		
Oct	57,652			561,740		
Nov	51,246			612,986		
Dec	48,518			661,504		

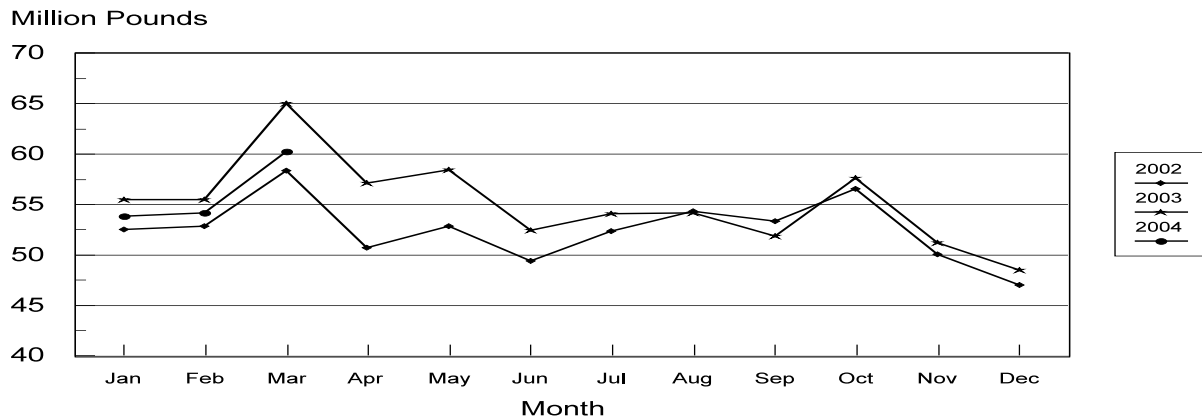
**Farm-Raised Catfish: Prices Paid to Producers by Processors
and Imports, United States, 2003-2004**

Month	Price per Pound ¹		Change from Previous Year Dollars	Imports ²		Percent of Previous Year Percent
	2003	2004		2003	2004	
	<i>Dollars</i>	<i>Dollars</i>		<i>1,000 Pounds</i>	<i>1,000 Pounds</i>	
Jan	0.529	0.668	0.139	1,322	215	16
Feb	0.544	0.703	0.159	260	204	78
Mar	0.585	0.723	0.138	332		
Apr	0.630			272		
May	0.618			703		
Jun	0.586			893		
Jul	0.564			435		
Aug	0.552			135		
Sep	0.560			150		
Oct	0.567			384		
Nov	0.610			331		
Dec	0.629			213		

¹ Price for fish delivered to the processing plant door. Price includes charges for any services provided by the processing plant, such as seining and hauling, but does not include adjustments based on year-end settlements.

² Pounds of frozen boneless fillets. Data furnished by U.S. Bureau of Census.

**Catfish Processed
United States 2002-2004**



-Catfish Processors: Sales Volume, Average Price, and Ending Inventory, United States, March 2003-2004

Item	Sales Volume		Average Price		Ending Inventory	
	2003	2004	2003	2004	2003	2004
	<i>1,000 Pounds</i>	<i>1,000 Pounds</i>	<i>Dollars per Pound</i>	<i>Dollars per Pound</i>	<i>1,000 Pounds</i>	<i>1,000 Pounds</i>
Fresh Fish						
Whole						
Round & Guttled	1,284	1,266	0.87	1.05	*	*
Whole Dressed	3,055	2,542	1.52	1.79	*	*
Total	4,339	3,808	1.35	1.57	211	316
Other						
Steaks	128	123	1.93	2.11	*	*
Nuggets	1,195	1,104	1.16	1.28	116	125
Other ¹	276	340	2.82	2.95	*	*
Total	1,599	1,567	1.51	1.71	120	159
Fillets ²	6,715	6,815	2.44	2.71	495	552
Total Fresh	12,653	12,190	1.95	2.22	826	1,027
Frozen Fish						
Whole Dressed	1,500	1,302	1.84	1.97	1,794	1,415
Other						
Steaks	124	126	1.75	1.91	87	105
Nuggets	2,961	3,095	1.09	1.09	1,350	2,097
Other ¹	1,753	1,560	2.46	2.63	808	775
Total	4,838	4,781	1.60	1.61	2,245	2,977
Fillets ²	11,494	10,572	2.43	2.67	5,194	5,539
Total Frozen	17,832	16,655	2.16	2.31	9,233	9,931
Fresh & Frozen Fish						
Whole						
Round & Guttled	1,284	1,266	0.87	1.05	*	*
Whole Dressed	4,555	3,844	1.63	1.85	*	*
Total	5,839	5,110	1.47	1.67	2,005	1,731
Other						
Steaks	252	249	1.84	2.01	*	*
Nuggets	4,156	4,199	1.11	1.14	1,466	2,222
Other ¹	2,029	1,900	2.51	2.69	*	*
Total	6,437	6,348	1.58	1.64	2,365	3,136
Fillets ²	18,209	17,387	2.43	2.69	5,689	6,091
Total Fresh & Frozen	30,485	28,845	2.07	2.27	10,059	10,958

* Not published to avoid disclosure of individual operations.

¹ Includes all products not already reported including weight of breading and added ingredients.

² Includes regular, shank, and strip fillets; excludes any breaded products.

Catfish Processing Estimates

Survey Procedures: Survey data for catfish processing are collected from approximately 23 processors. All participating processors must meet the minimum criteria of having a capacity to process at least 2,000 pounds live weight of catfish per 8-hour shift. The survey is conducted entirely by NASS Headquarter's staff in Washington, D.C. NASS field offices, however, are responsible for keeping Headquarters informed of any new processing operations in their state to ensure that the survey coverage is as complete as possible. Processors are contacted either by mail or telephone. Diligent effort is made to ensure that all operations are accounted for in the estimate.

Estimation Procedures: The "**Catfish Processing**" report refers strictly to farm-raised fish and excludes wild capture fish. Prior to summarization, questionnaires are compared with the previous month's reports for comparable placement of data, reasonable price levels, and reasonable inventory carryover given the sales and processing totals reported. Estimates are made for those processors whose reports are not available in time to be included in the release. These plants are identified by an asterisk on page 5 of this release. Estimates are normally based on the processor's previous report and current conditions. Published totals are a straight summation of the individual reports and estimated data. Price items are weighted by the associated volumes to compute weighted average prices. The published price for total whole fish, however, reflects an adjustment to the round and gutted only price to bring it to an equivalent dressed weight price.

If a plant uses a fiscal accounting system, proration is used to convert reported data to a calendar month basis. Only national level estimates are published due to the limited number of plants involved. Generally, individual items are not published if there are less than three plants reporting, or if any one plant has 60 percent or more of the total.

One unique feature of the "**Catfish Processing**" report is the listing of cooperating processors by name on each month's release. This feature originally was used to solicit industry cooperation in maintaining coverage, but it has continued because of the processors' overall acceptance of this policy.

Import and export data for frozen catfish fillets, which are compiled by the Department of Commerce, are also included in this report.

Reliability: Catfish processing estimates are based on a census of all known active processors and, therefore, have no sampling variability. However, estimates may be subject to errors such as omissions, duplication, and mistakes in reporting, recording, and processing of the data. These errors are minimized through strict quality controls in the edit and summarization process, and a careful review of all reported data for consistency and reasonableness.

Revision Policy: Revisions may be necessary following a review of late reports received from plants. Revisions of less than 2 percent of the existing published levels of any category will normally not be made.